PROGRAMMATIC INITIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EXAMINATION
AND
REQUEST FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (RCE)
AMENDMENT 2

PROGRAM/ACTIVITY DATA:

Activity Name: Middle East Water Security Initiative
Country/Region: Middle East Regional
Start Date: September 20, 2016     End Date: December 31, 2022
Life of Project Amount: MWSI: $ 50 Million
RCE prepared by: John Wilson     Date: 7/5/2019
Amendment: Yes (amends IEE ME-15-02 (original IEE), and ME 19-41 (Amendment # 1))

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION RECOMMENDED: (Place X where applicable)
Categorical Exclusion: X     Negative Determination: X
Positive Determination:     Deferral: 

ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS: (Place X where applicable)
CONDITIONS PVO/NGO: 

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this document is to amend IEE ME 15-02 (original IEE) and ME 19-41 (Amendment # 1) to document the new end date of March 31, 2021 for the "Acceleration of Aquifer Storage and Recovery Activity" under the Middle East Water Security Initiative program. All other threshold determinations and conditions remain unchanged.

Description of Activities

USGS's Aquifer Storage and Recovery was initially a three-year activity. The concept was selected through a response to an addendum to the Middle East Water Security Initiative (MWSI) Development Innovation Accelerator BAA (Addendum BAA-MWSI-ME-2015) posted on Grants.gov and FedBizOpps.gov on July 16, 2015. The concept was greenlighted by the review panel on January 15, 2016, in which 20 concepts were reviewed, and recommended for award. The award was signed on August 25, 2016.

The goal of this activity is improve water security in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region by accelerating the practice of aquifer storage and recovery (ASR). New methods for identifying high potential ASR sites, based on remote sensing and geospatial hydrologic analysis, will be applied and demonstrated. The study will build the capacity of MENA
national institutions to develop non-conventional water resources for domestic and agricultural water supplies. The activity is being implemented in Jordan and Lebanon.

The purpose of the proposed cost/time extension is to allow additional time to successfully complete the study. USGS has faced some delays implementing the MENA ASR project. The project start was delayed due to contractual difficulties in establishing grants with USGS’s regional partners, the American University of Beirut (AUB), An-Najah National University (ANU, Nablus), and the National Center for Research and Development (NCRD, Jordan).

For the past two years USGS experienced several months delay each year due to new administrative procedures for Department of the Interior Secretarial Clearances for grants. USGS has now received that approval for all the project grants, and is fully engaged with its partners.

This past winter USGS was impacted significantly by the government shutdown, during which the ASR annual project workshop was scheduled, and by the cessation of project implementation in the West Bank, as directed by USAID, effective 31 January 2019.

The financial schedule for USGS’s grantees is based on the grants' respective start dates, the last of which was set for June 2019, such that the third and final grant budget year will be June 2019 through June 2020. However, the current USGS-USAID agreement has an end date of 30 August 2019. An extension of the period of performance is needed to allow USGS to continue to work with the grantees after August 2019, during their 3rd grant budget year, and to allow USGS to compile the final project report after the grantees have completed their study area tasks and reports, and prepared analyses and information needed for the USGS final report. USGS now anticipates that it will need about 6 months to finalize the project (USGS) report after the grantees have submitted their final reports. For these reasons, USGS has asked for a no-cost extension until 31 March 2021.

**RECOMMENDED THRESHOLD DECISION**

A **Categorical Exclusion** is recommended for the USGS Aquifer Storage and Recovery no-cost time extension pursuant to 22 CFR 216.2(c )(2)(i), “Education, technical assistance, or training programs except to the extent such programs include activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.).”

**Climate Risk Management**

As per the ADS 201mal and the executive order on “Climate-Resilient International Development,” USAID shall factor climate resilience into international development programs and investments. This applies to new projects and activities after October 1, 2016. This activity started before this date, and is therefore exempt from the climate risk management screening requirements.
Revisions

Pursuant to 22 CFR 216.3(a)(9), if new information becomes available that indicates that activities to be funded might be “major” and the effect “significant,” this categorical exclusion will be reviewed and revised by the originator of the project and submitted to the Bureau Environmental Officer for approval, and, if appropriate, an environmental assessment will be prepared.

APPROVAL OF RECOMMENDED ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION:

CLEARANCE:

ME/TS, Jim Wright date: 7/19/2019

Regional Environmental Advisor
Clearance email date: 7/9/2019
Anan Masri

APPROVAL:

ME Bureau Environmental Officer
Approval: date 7/18/2019
John Wilson